

## Thomas Jefferson to Washington, D.C., Commissioners, April 9, 1792, from Thomas Jefferson and the National Capital. Edited by Saul K. Padover.

### Jefferson to the Commissioners JEFFERSON TO THE COMMISSIONERS

*Philadelphia April 9th. 1792*

*Gentlemen*

In a former letter I enclosed you an Idea of Mr. Lee's for an immediate appropriation of a number of Lots, to raise a sum of Money for erecting a national monument in the City of Washington, it was scarcely to be doubted but that you would avoid appropriations for matters of ornament till a sufficient Sum should be secured out of the proceeds of your sales to accomplish the Public buildings, bridges & other such objects as are essential. Mr. Ceracchi, the artist, who had proposed to execute the monument, has had hopes that a subscription set on foot for that purpose, would have sufficed to effect it. that hope is now over, and he is about to return to Europe. he is unquestionably an artist of the first Class. he has had the advantage of taking the model of the President's person in plaster, equal to every wish in resemblance and Spirit, it is pretty certain, that the Equestrian Statue of the President can never be executed by an equal workman, who has had equal advantages, and the Question is, whether a prudent caution will permit you to enter into any engagement, now taking time enough before the term of payment, to have accomplished the more material objects of the public buildings &c. He says that to execute the Equestrian Statue with the cost of the materials in marble, will be worth 20,000 Guineas. That he could begin it on his return, if four or five years hence you can engage to pay him 20,000 Dollars, and the same sum annually afterwards till the whole is paid, before which time the Statue

## Library of Congress

shall be ready. It is rather probable that within some time Congress would take it off our hands, in compliance with an antient Vote of that body. The Question for your consideration are whether, supposing no difficulty as to the means, you think such a work might be undertaken by you? whether you can have so much confidence in the productiveness of your funds, as to engage for a residuum of this amount, all more necessary objects being first secured, & that this may be within the times, before proposed? And in fine which will preponderate in your minds, the hazard of undertaking this now, or that of losing the aid of this Artist. The nature of this proposition will satisfy you, that it has not been communicated to the President, and of course would not be unless a previous acceptance on your part should render it necessary to obtain his sanction. Your answer is necessary for the satisfaction of Mr. Ceracchi, at whose instance I submit the proposal to you, & who I believe will only wait here the return of that answer. I have the honour to be with the most perfect esteem,

Gentlemen, yours &c.

Th: Jefferson

[Pp. 86–7, COMMISSIONERS' LETTERBOOK Vol. I, 1791–1793, in the National Archives; p 322, Mem. Ed., VIII.]